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Alpha program for the unchurched takes off in Canada

COURTESY COURT BAKER

Organizers of the Alpha program at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Niagara Falls. From left, Valerie and David Williams, Jack Hall, Joe and Pat Eden, Bobs and Court Baker.

Alan Doerksen

NIAGARA FALLS, Ont. — Since it was started 17 years ago, the Alpha course has grown from an informal discussion group at a church in London, England, to a basic course in Christianity now being offered by 4,000 churches worldwide. Recently it came to Canada and is now being offered by churches in seven provinces.

Alpha is a 15-session introduction to Christianity designed especially for non-churchgoers and new Christians. The Alpha Course was devised 17 years ago by Charles Marnham, a clergyman at Holy Trinity Brompton, an Anglican church in London, England. New Christians attending the church would meet each week at Marnham's home to discuss basic principles of Christianity in a relaxed setting.

Rev. Nicky Gumbel, the present curate of Holy Trinity church, took over the program five years ago and developed it from a course in Christianity into a method of evangelism. He worked to create an atmosphere and study materials that would be attractive and comfortable for non-churchgoers. The course grew quickly, and now more than 450 people take part in each Alpha course offered by Holy Trinity church.

Food and fellowship

Gumbel, a former lawyer and atheist, became a priest after his conversion. Now he spends much of his time developing and promoting the Alpha program around the world.

Most Alpha courses are held in the evening and start with a light meal followed by a talk or a video dealing with a subject central to Christianity. Then participants break into small groups of up to 12 people to discuss whatever questions they have.

A team of Christian leaders and helpers help organize the program and lead the small groups. The meetings may include times of praise and worship, depending on how many Christians are involved. One key focus of the program is a weekend dealing with the Holy Spirit. At the end of each course is an Alpha supper, which participants attend along with friends they've invited.

Some of the main subjects dealt with in Alpha are:

- ***Who is Jesus?***
- ***Why did Jesus die?***
- ***Why read the Bible?***
- ***Why and how should we pray?***
- ***How can I resist evil?***
- ***How does God guide us?***
- ***Does God heal today?***

Churches across Britain and around the world, from many denominations, have quickly become interested in Alpha over the past five years. Holy Trinity church now publishes *Alpha News*, a paper which keeps church leaders informed about the program's latest developments.

Friends bring friends

In a recent issue, Gumbel discussed the course's growth: "One of the reasons Alpha is growing so fast is because the people who are converted on Alpha have a range of people to bring to the supper and invite on the next course.... It's all friendship-based. There's no knocking on doors, there's little advertising, but it's friends bringing friends."

Though "alpha" is an allusion to Christ as the beginning of all

See **NIAGARA** *page 2...*

Churches must put gospel to work on social problems

Vancouver's male prostitutes a forgotten group

James Kwantes

VANCOUVER — In an era when government-funded agencies of all kinds are feeling the financial pinch, churches have a crucial role to play in helping these institutions address societal problems.

That was the message Staff-Sergeant Brian McKay-Dunn of the Vancouver City Police Department gave to a group of Vancouver Christians on September 11. McKay-Dunn is trying to raise funds from the community for a special project that he feels is not getting the attention or the funding it deserves: "boystown."

Boystown is a downtown Vancouver area where grown men pick up young male prostitutes for sex. The prostitutes range in age from 13 to 25 years old and often migrate to Vancouver from other Canadian cities. The "johns" are usually bisexual and are often married men who have a child seat in the back of the car, says Mackay-Dunn. He is trying to get church and community backing to help fund one full-time outreach worker who would work to get kids off the street.

"I would suggest strongly to the church, 'work on these lost souls,'" said Mackay-Dunn, who is a Christian. "Work on them and return their spirit to them. The church can play a big role."

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News

Niagara Falls church enthused about Alpha

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things, it's also an anagram which describes the program itself:

Anyone: whoever is interested in finding out more about the Christian faith can be invited;

Learning and laughter: learning about Christianity and relaxing together at the same time.

Pasta: sharing a meal together helps participants to build friendships.

Help one another: study the Bible together and pray for each other.

Ask anything: in the Alpha program, no question is regarded as too simple or too hostile.

ALPHA NEWS

Nicky Gumbel

Steady growth

Last September, Alpha was introduced to Canadian church leaders at a meeting in Toronto. Among the people who went were three couples from St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Niagara Falls, Ont. They were enthused about Alpha and started the program at St. John's that same month. Seventeen people came to the first course and 35 came to the closing supper, which was designed to get others acquainted with the program.

Since then, the course has grown steadily. Last January, two courses were held, which attracted 53 people and 99 for the closing supper. This month, St. John's has started its third Alpha session. Once again the numbers have grown: the opening supper attracted 125 people, and the new courses were registered up to capacity very quickly. The fall courses now have 20 helpers and 53 other participants.

Court Baker, one member of St. John's who went to the Toronto information meeting a year ago, is very enthusiastic about Alpha. "I'm up to my ears in it. It's exciting!" he says. Baker especially appreciates the Holy Spirit weekend which concludes each course, because the Holy Spirit is often de-emphasized in churches. "You never hear about the third member of the Trinity," says Baker. "But it's the Spirit who was there at Creation and who works in people's hearts." At the Holy Spirit weekends, people are often "slain in the Spirit," says Baker. "People laugh, they cry. You lie on the floor and a remarkable peace comes over you."

A major commitment

Valerie and David Williams, a couple at St. John's, are also very involved with Alpha there. Although they are retired, David says he is "working longer hours than I ever did before" with the program. Alpha is also a major commitment for Valerie. She credits Nicky Gumbel as being one of the main reasons for the program's growth.

"He's quite a brilliant speaker," says Valerie. Gumbel is "not your Bible-thumping evangelist." The St. John's Alpha program uses a series of videos featuring Gumbel as the focus for its discussions. The videos are professionally done, which Valerie says is one reason for the program's success.

Each Alpha session at St. John's starts with a supper followed by a time of praise, a video, and small group discussions. Each small group has two leaders and two helpers, all of whom are committed to confidentiality about their discussions, says David. They use Alpha training manuals to help prepare for the program.

Tailored courses

The first time St. John's offered the Alpha course, most of the participants were from the parish, says Valerie. But this fall, most are from outside the church. It is important that new participants feel warmly welcomed, she emphasizes.

"The strongest response this time has been people from other churches," says David. St. John's advertised the program at all other churches in Niagara Falls. The courses at St. John's are tailored to the audience. For instance, if there are mostly non-Christians in a course, not as much time is spent on singing and praise, he says.

He recommends Alpha as "a brush-up course for even the most committed Christians" and as a good course for Christians struggling with their faith. Participants in the program range in age "from the early 20s up to the very elderly," says David.

Widespread interest

The Holy Spirit weekend is often the turning point of the course, says David. During the weekend, the participants have an opportunity for an infilling of the Holy Spirit, he explains.

Most people at St. John's support the Alpha program, says Valerie, but some church members "want to do things the way we've always had it." But she notes that some of these people have joined the Alpha program and have had a change of heart.

Other churches in the Niagara region are now showing interest in the program and have contacted the Williamses about it. At present, about 30 churches in Ontario and nine in Quebec offer the Alpha program. As well, there are others in Alberta, B.C., Manitoba, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. These include Anglican, Baptist, Salvation Army and Vineyard churches.

Government ignores 'Boystown'

... continued from page 1

The 25-year police veteran says he has been stymied by government officials whose approach to dealing with boystown is to pretend it doesn't exist. The problem of young female prostitutes is more high-profile, and gets far more government money and funds raised by community groups, he says.

No sense of self-worth

But Mackay-Dunn says the plight of the roughly 35 to 50 young people who populate boystown at any given time is just as sad. Most of them have lost all sense of self-worth and don't realize the danger they put themselves into by selling their bodies for sex. Many of the kids were abused as children. Virtually all of them use drugs as an escape.

"When you talk to them, their faces are almost absolutely blank," Mackay-Dunn told the group. "They don't care about themselves and nobody cares about them." Mackay-Dunn says the outreach worker would have to be someone who could "walk their way" and "talk their way." He already has an individual in mind for the job: but the project hinges on finding a combination of groups to fund $43,000 a year for the three-year pilot project.

"The church should forge partnerships with service clubs that do not pump a lot of money into bureaucracies or administrative costs," he said. He feels once the program gets underway, it will grow exponentially, as people who once sold their bodies on the street will return to pull others off that destructive path.

"If one kid is helped, he'll want to repay somehow," said Mackay-Dunn, who is nearing retirement and wants to get this project off the ground before he turns in his badge. "That's how it works."

Canadian relief worker reports desperate need in Liberia

Thousands of children at risk of starvation

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — To meet the needs of severely malnourished children in Liberia, World Vision has established an emergency feeding centre near the town of Tubmanburg, in western Liberia. World Vision Canada provided funding for the initial distribution of food aid; however, approximately $273,900 is needed to maintain the centre for a period of three months.

World Vision Canada President-elect Dave Toycen has issued an emergency appeal to raise additional funds. "Children are dying of starvation in Liberia," said Toycen. "We urge every Canadian to reach out with compassion at this critical time. We who have so much, have a responsibility to help those who have nothing."

Less than 10 km from Tubmanburg, a World Vision relief assessment team recently discovered another village where residents are also facing starvation. Like Tubmanburg, the village of Guyah Hill had been cut off for months from food supplies due to rebel activities.

Existing on leaves

"Villagers were hiding in the bush, existing on the leaves of cassava and sweet potato plants, unaware that a cease-fire was in place," said Karen Homer, a Canadian relief worker with World Vision in Liberia. "I have never seen anything like this in my experience with World Vision. If the needs are so desperate in this one area, we fear what may be happening across the whole of Liberia."

World Vision participated in the UN convoy that delivered the first emergency food aid to the Tubmanburg population on September 9. Tragically, relief workers helplessly witnessed mothers and children die while waiting in line to receive their emergency food rations. The convoy estimated that approximately 4,000 children are severely malnourished; more than 17,000 people in the area are suffering from the effects of acute hunger.

Public donations can be made by calling 1-800-268-1650, or mailed to World Vision Canada, P.O. Box 2500, Mississauga, ON L5N 2S4.

No Issue on October 4, 1996

In keeping with our no-issue schedule (see box on page 5), we will not publish an issue on October 4, 1996. Deadline for the next issue (October 11) is Wednesday, October 2, 1996.

'Just a housewife'

Donald Keith

"'Just a housewife!' What do you mean, 'Just a housewife'?"

The girl behind the desk was shocked at my outburst as she stared at me through horn-rimed glasses over the government form she was holding, but I didn't care. I had heard that comment just one too many times. She gave me her professional smile. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it the way it sounded."

"I'm afraid you did. Just like all you career people think — anyone who chooses to look after a home and raise their kids is a nothing."

"All I meant was that, well, you don't seem to have any special training," she said, flustered. She pushed up her glasses and glanced at the ceiling as if for help.

CC FILES

No special training?

I almost jumped out of my chair. "No special training! Yesterday I made breakfast for five kids, including my husband: made their lunches, the beds, vacuumed the upstairs and put in a load of wash before 9 a.m. Then I washed the dishes, chopped up the ingredients for a batch of chilli and put it on to cook; did the dishes again, cleaned throughout the downstairs, and for lunch had a third cup of coffee and a sandwich."

When I paused for breath she waved the form at me. "But that's not...." I wasn't going to be stopped now.

"In the afternoon I caught the bus to the market, we have only one car; I picked up some fresh vegetables and things, spent an hour in the garden and then started supper. The chilli was ready so I packed it in jars and washed the pots. Then I actually sat down and studied for an hour.

She made another attempt but I was too fast for her. "The kids came home, had a jelly sandwich and I helped them with their homework. One of their bikes had a flat so we got out the tools, took the tire off, patched the tube and put it back together. My son struck a screwdriver half way through his finger, so I had to clean it up and make it better. After supper I sewed my daughter's new dress, washed the kids and put them to bed. Then we entertained another couple till 10:30; the dishes again. And that was an easy day.

The silence was deafening and I became aware of a faint odor that was issuing from my pores, as it always did when I got excited. I took a deep breath and wilted a bit.

She sat back in her chair and smiled at me. "I guess I'd better change my thinking. You've mentioned half a dozen things that are beyond me. Now let's start over, shall we?"

Donald Keith lives in Forest, Ont.

Oshawa area sees expansion of Christian retirement home

CC Staff

WHITBY, Ont. — Durham Christian Homes plans to build a second tower of 126 units, as well as recreational and worship facilities.

The present tower, called Providence Place, holds 124 residential units and was built in 1988. Like Providence Place, the new tower, which will be called Tekoa Manor, is geared to adults and seniors looking for a retirement home that offers Christian fellowship, recreation, security and convenient shopping and medical services.

Plans are to rent out the bottom six floors. Down payment for a rental unit is $500 plus the remainder of one month's rent at construction. Units are 620 or 850 square feet and rent from $955 to $1225 per month.

The top four floors of Tekoa Manor will consist of "Life Lease" units. "Under Life Lease, you purchase the right to occupy your unit for as long as you want," says Fred Wind, the project co-ordinator. "At the end, Durham Christian Homes markets the unit again and you receive 90 per cent of the proceeds.

Down payment for a Life Lease unit is $2,500, which is fully refundable. Once the final design is fixed and the building has been tendered, the purchasers will be asked to increase their deposit to 25 per cent of the construction price. Final payment is due upon move-in.

Life Lease units vary in size from 745 to 850 square feet and start at $109,000. A monthly maintenance fee will cover common area expenses, building insurance, taxes and a capital reserve fund.

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Kingston-WLKC	7:30 a.m	100.7
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St.Catharines-CKTB	7:30pm	610
Sarnia-CHOK	7:30am	1070
Stratford-CJCS	8:45am	1240
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Editorials

Are things getting worse or better?

Someone remarked that society is going to the dogs. He mentioned the fact that some men were feeding a "date rape" drug to unsuspecting women. He could have added the decision by Manitoba's Court of Appeal that a pregnant woman on solvents cannot be forced to stop harming her unborn baby because a fetus is not considered a person; plus several other depressing sorts of news items that tell us that our society is losing touch with life-affirming rules for living.

But has it ever been different in the world? It has if one takes the shorter view of history. Societies go through ups and downs. Compared with the beginning of this century, Western societies have witnessed a breakdown of public morality. But if one takes the longer view, not much has really changed. In essence, the world has never been better nor worse than it is today.

But all of this makes one wonder sometimes whether there is any purpose or meaning to what is happening in the world. Dutch professor J.H. Bavinck addressed that question some years ago in his booklet *Het raadsel van ons leven* (*The Puzzle of Our Life*). "Are all these centuries, all those events, all those wars and discoveries fruitless, or may we say that world history is the realization of a plan?" he asks.

According to Bavinck there are three answers to that question. The optimistic view is that world history moves on a plain of continual improvements, which are then traced in the area of emancipation, knowledge, love and unity.

In contrast to that stands the starkly pessimistic view: culture and technology move us farther and farther away from happiness and from a more natural life of instinct. Wars get more devastating. World history takes us on a path of destruction.

The third position is that there is neither progress nor decline. One can say that any given culture advances or declines, but over the long haul, it's constantly a matter of renewal, growth, decline and renewal. It's foolish to ask for any purpose. The meaning of life is life itself.

Two distinct lines

Bavinck takes another approach from these three. He notices that various cultures are drawing closer together and that modern technology breaches incredible distances. We have become one humanity, one body, one whole. Where will that lead us? One world empire? One world culture?

Bavinck rejects as illusion the idea that history is a process that leads to freedom, happiness, love and perfection. Advances in human culture have little to do with advances in goodness, he says. What the Gospel teaches us, says Bavinck, is that world history is governed by two factors from start to finish.

The first is the reality of sin and the self-deification of human beings. This comes to expression in the asceticism of Eastern religions as well as in the Western desire for power. He pictures human beings as tired climbers who pursue with difficulty the road to deification. In the end, he sees the power of technology falling into the hands of bad characters and human life becoming mechanized and externalized.

The second factor in world history is God's work of grace, says Bavinck. In the midst of this clumsy human work, God embroiders the plan of his Kingdom. It's a Kingdom that moves through history on the *via dolorosa*, the path of sorrow, just like its Lord, Jesus himself. That Kingdom is constantly threatened with becoming secular and superficial. But God carries it and leads it until, the final crisis, when God will be all in all.

Throughout all world developments one thing is certain, says Bavinck: outside of God nothing is safe. True salvation takes place only when humans recognize their place again in the creation as children of God.

Something to chew on while you watch the news or read the paper. **BW**

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In praise of wimpy lawn care

I got a phone call from a local lawn company the other day. They wanted to spray our lawn against grubs. Now I must admit, grubs are real pests in this area of Ontario, if you like to have a lawn at all.

When we first moved to St. Catharines, we lived in another house. We noticed that the front lawn turned a golden brown towards the end of the summer and that skunks drilled all kinds of holes in the soil. We didn't know what this meant, not having lived in this Niagara ecological system before. In Woodbridge, our former locale, we never had this kind of problem. So the lawn died on us and we had to reseed. People at the garden centre told us that this was a common problem and one had to apply a grub killer.

The phone call I got a few weeks ago reminded me of all this. I told the man who called that I planned to look after the problem myself.

"But the chemicals you buy at the garden centres are wimpy," he said to me. "They're environmentally friendly."

"Your chemicals are not environmentally friendly?" I asked.

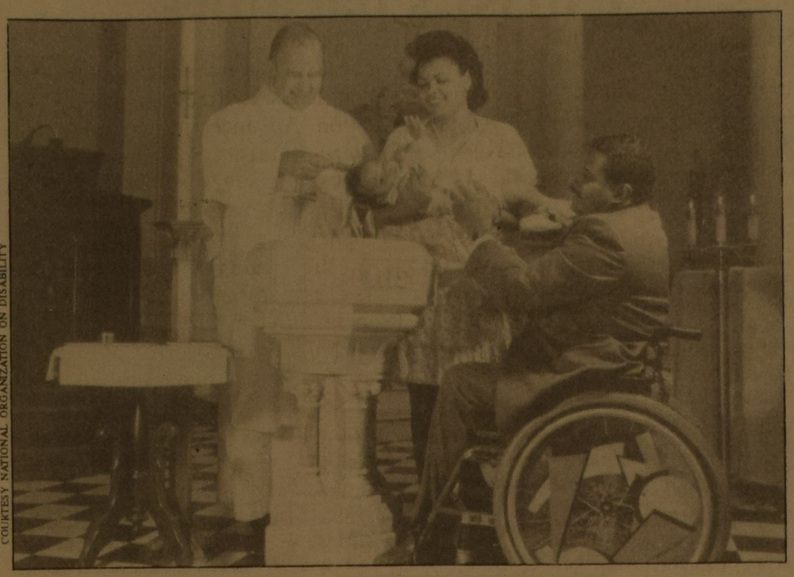
"Oh, no," he answered with conviction. "After we apply Diazon, you have to keep your pets and children off the lawn for three days." He paused, thinking that he had made the strongest sales pitch he possibly could have made.

I told him that I was not interested in having him do this to my lawn, and that I would look after the problem myself, although I'm not sure I will succeed. Having a small lawn surrounded by other lawns and a golf course that are constantly sprayed makes it difficult for me to establish our own ecosystem. It's like declaring one part of a pool a no-peeing section. I have an idea that the grubs are being chased into our yard.

Nevertheless, I must try to find an environmentally friendly solution. One garden booklet recommends beneficial nematodes as a safe biological control. I must try it. In fact, I have ordered 10 million nematodes, which are living organisms that will eat grubs. How can I pray "Your Kingdom come" when I try to stop the kingdom from coming by using Diazon? **BW**

Letters

Support for disabled sadly lacking in the church



COURTESY NATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON DISABILITY

It was refreshing to read Mr. Mulder's letter (Sept. 13) urging for a greater ministry outreach to be directed at vulnerable members in our churches other than homosexuals; i.e., singles, childless couples (not by choice) and the physically challenged. Allow me to focus on the latter group since I belong to that category myself.

As noted by Mr. Mulder, (declared) homosexuals comprise about two to three per cent of the population. In comparison, the physically challenged make up 12 to 13 per cent of a typical population. To put it another way, statistically there are six times more physically challenged than homosexual persons in North America.

Consider the following questions, if you please. Why are people with a homosexual lifestyle receiving so much publicity as of late, in CC as well as in the secular press, radio and TV? I wonder: is it perhaps that the issue of homosexuality is trendier than the discussion of the place of the physically challenged in our churches (and society)? Is it perhaps because persons with a homosexual orientation tend to be more vocal, educated and/or sophisticated in voicing their opinions?

From my own experience I know that the physically challenged have a daily struggle with their ailments and have often, as a result, little desire or energy left to voice their complaints. As I look around in my church on Sunday morning, I hardly ever see a person in a wheelchair. Are these members ignored or forgotten? Seldom, in my experience, is a physically challenged (or aging) member nominated for office bearer, asked to be a lay reader or to tell a children's story, play piano or organ. Are we afraid of some missed notes, a faltering voice, steps that need to be negotiated, or a slight Dutch accent?

The poor turnout and participation by CRC pastors, elders and deacons at last May's conference for and by the physically challenged at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University and entitled "At the King's Table" is no doubt indicative of the general apathy towards people with disabilities in the CRC. What a waste of talent!

My hope and prayer for the coming church year is that the physically challenged will be given more attention so that they will experience a greater sense of ownership in their congregations. This ministry costs money. To that end, more collections should be designated for the Committee for Disability Concerns.

Let me quote from the interfaith booklet *That All May Worship*: "At some point, lay and religious leaders should publicly declare that people with disabilities are welcome in the congregation. Such a declaration is a celebration of progress toward the goal of becoming a fully inclusive congregation. This welcome should not be delayed until every desirable change has been made, every program is in place or every attitude has been examined."

Henry Lammers
St. Catharines, Ont.

Poem

Daily Miracles

When I see a new dawn breaking,
glorious sunrise in the sky,
I behold God's faithful caring,
and I know his loving eye.

When I see the brilliant dewdrops
give new freshness all around,
then I sense the peaceful fragrance
that alone in God is found.

When I hear a rushing river,
or a gently babbling stream,
joyful songs my ears are hearing
of Creator God supreme.

When I hear the gentle whisper
through the branches of a tree,
it's as if my Lord is saying,
"Fear not, simply follow me."

When I see the snowcapped
mountains
reaching upward to the sky,
I'm reminded of God's promise
set before us in the sky.

When I see the snowflakes falling,
making all things clear and bright,
then I think of my dear Savior
washing scarlet sins till white.

When I look with awe and wonder
at the starry skies above,
then I see only my smallness
next to his amazing love.

When I see a newborn baby,
pink and rosy, parents' pride,
I behold the covenant promise
of the God who will provide.

When I feel the simple trusting
of a child's hand put in mine,
then I learn to trust in Jesus,
and his gracious love divine.

When I see a smile of gladness
on a friend's beloved face,
then I see God's love reflected,
making joyful all my days.

When I see the golden sunset
paint the sky in bright array,
all is well, for I have met him
through the wonders of the day.

Romy VanderBos
Richmond, B.C.

Lighten up!

You are working too hard. If there is too much for me to read (and I am retired), there surely is too much for you to write.

We miss the lighter stuff such as Carl Tuyl used to contribute. The paper becomes too heavy.

Leonard Verbeek
Toronto, Ont.

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ARTS & MEDIA

Emma

18th century showpiece an affable evening's entertainment

Marian Van Til

Rated PG. Stars Gwenyth Paltrow, Greta Scaachi, Jeremy Northam, Toni Collette, Ewan McGregor, Juliet Stevenson, Alan Cumming. Written and directed by Douglas McGrath.

In the recent parade of film versions of Jane Austen novels, *Emma* is the latest and probably last, for now. This film will satisfy (most) Austen aficionados as well as film-goers who may not know Austen but who like old-fashioned stories full of romance, style, good humor and good manners.

Sumptuous look

The film's look is sumptuous, in keeping with its late 18th century English setting, and the acting ranges from solid to inspired. Initially there was open skepticism expressed, especially in England, about the casting of the upper-class, match-making Englishwoman of the title. First-time director Douglas McGrath, an American, gave the role to Gwenyth Paltrow, a 22-year-old American who had previously played only a few minor roles. (The rest of the cast are British.)

McGrath's critics were quickly silenced. Paltrow's acting deserves being called inspired. With the appropriate British accent flawlessly in place, Paltrow seamlessly portrays Emma Woodhouse's subtle character transformation. The unexpected results of Emma's matchmaking gradually change her from a well-meaning but rather careless meddler in other people's emotions into a more thoughtful, mature young woman who begins to take her relationships and her advantaged station in life much more seriously. Paltrow's alabaster skin, swan-like neck, doe eyes and slightly pouting mouth complete the picture of a privileged 18th century Englishwoman.

Gwenyth Paltrow gives an inspired performance as Emma.

Book has more depth

The plot doesn't contain much suspense. It's pretty clear from the outset that Miss Emma Woodhouse and her friend Mr. Knightley are made for each other. They have a satisfyingly close relationship which allows them to speak honestly with each other, show annoyance at each other's idiosyncracies and chide each other when appropriate. The audience sees them as a match long before Emma the Matchmaker and her friend do themselves.

Even so, the story is still engaging. The film could have had more substance, however, if it had made better use of the keen wit and biting social satire Austen displays in the novel; and if it had taken better advantage of how the novel explicates Austen's views on single, intelligent and independent women, and on Platonic friendship between men and women — ever contemporary subjects.

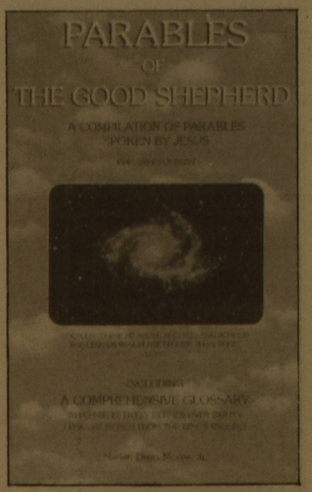
As it stands, this version of *Emma* is a pleasant, often amusing love story acted out in handsome costumes and set in lovely gardens and imposing mansions — an affable evening's entertainment.

An 'old' new look at Christ's parables

Marian Van Til

Parables of the Good Shepherd: A Compilation of Parables Spoken by Jesus

By Harlan Dean Moore, Jr.



Marengo, Illinois: Journey Bookshelf, 1996. 120 pp. Softcover; ISBN 1-887076-17-4. $8.95 US.

This slightly strange but intriguing little book contains all of Jesus's parables, compiled in the order in which they appear in each Gospel — *in the King James Version* of the Bible.

Author Harlan Moore begins by setting out his purpose in compiling the parables. In a preface written in 15 rhymed stanzas he voices the hope that anyone of any religion who reads the parables will discover "THE TRUTH that Christ did bring." (He concludes the book with an "author's apology" written in 17 rhymed couplets.) If Moore's versifications leave something to be desired, his intent is unimpeachable.

It's helpful to have a source in which all of Christ's parables are compiled. (Moore makes the point that one-third of Jesus's recorded words in Scripture occur in parables.) But I have mixed feelings about how helpful it is to set them down in King James English. I say that even though I first heard and read Jesus's parables — and everything else in Scripture — in the King James Version, and still appreciate that version's mellifluous, often poetic language.

Moore obviously wanted to expose readers to that beautiful language. But if his purpose is to bring modern non-Christians to recognize the Christ as the Truth and the Way, I'm not sure the best way to do that is by using a translation in late-16th century English. Moore does provide a glossary of words used in the KJV with which readers may not be familiar (those words are not, for the most part, obsolete). Somehow, though, the book feels more like it was written for Christians than for wandering searchers.

Moore introduces the parables with six short annotated "essays" — some are not really essays, but mostly Scripture quotations. The most useful of these is the first, entitled "What is a Parable?"

Moore explains that "parable" comes from the Greek word *parabole*, literally, an analogy. Then he asks us to consider the similarity between "parable" and "parabola."

If you suffered through high school geometry you may remember that a parabola is a type of curve formed by the intersection of cone with a plane. Moore points out that "countless unique curves can be produced from any cone by varying the location and orientation of the bisecting plane. Yet, for any given cone there is just one orientation of the plane that will yield parabolic curves. Remarkably, this single orientation will produce a true parabola wherever it is applied to the cone."

Moore goes on to describe how the parabola is used in astronomy in the mirrors of reflecting telescopes, where the parabola becomes a three-dimensional paraboloid. After describing how such a mirror uses light, he concludes that "the further the eye moves away from the focal axis, the more off-center and distorted the image becomes...."

Even before Moore gets to astronomy, the reader can immediately see a metaphor developing that connects in a fascinating way to Christ's parables. That connection, and the re-reading of the parables in a translation most of us are no longer used to, may serve to revitalize for us these oft-heard but indispensable teachings of our Lord.

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MissionFest Toronto '97 attracts high profile speakers

TORONTO (MFT) — At a meeting in Peoples Church on September 17 it was announced that the speakers for the second Toronto MissionFest will be George Verwer and Don Richardson. "We are thrilled to have George Verwer," said Philip Wood, chairperson of the management team. "He is the main speaker at this years Urbana Convention, and has a great ministry to students as well as older people."

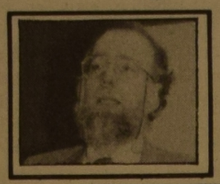
Don Richardson has been a popular conference speaker for many years but is best known for his books, such as *Peace Child* and *Lords of the Earth.*

"We are encouraged by the reaction to MissionFest 96," said Philip. "Although many who came had been at the Vancouver event, many churches did not know what to expect. They left enthusiastic and promised to give the event a higher profile next time."

This free event aimed at all the family will be held in Peoples Church from Feb. 28 - March 2, 1997. It is organized by a partnership of churches missions and colleges.

A new promotional video is circulating among churches and can be obtained from Michele Korec at (416) 463-1456. For general information about MissionFest call (416) 407-FEST.

Chapter & Verse



Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
★ Al Wolters

The 'Copper Scroll' and the New Testament

"Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades" (John 5:2, NIV).

In the beginning of September, I was privileged to attend an international scholarly conference in Manchester, England, which was devoted to the study of the "Copper Scroll." This scroll is one of the most enigmatic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, both because its text is written on copper, and because it consists of a list of buried treasure.

Most scholars believe (as I do myself) that the treasure listed in this document, comprising many tons of silver and gold, refers to a part of the enormous wealth of the temple in Jerusalem which was hidden in various places outside of Jerusalem shortly before the destruction of the city and the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. The Copper Scroll is therefore a very dramatic document which dates from New Testament times.

What about Bethesda?

It is well known that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in general has revolutionized our understanding of Judaism in the first century of the Christian era, and thus of the context in which the New Testament arose. I have often been asked, because of the work which I have done on the Copper Scroll: "Is there any light which this scroll in particular sheds on the New Testament?" Globally speaking, my answer has to be No. However, there are two facts about the Copper Scroll which do have a bearing on the New Testament. One of them has to do with the verse quoted at the head of this column.

The word "Bethesda" which we find in this verse is spelt in a number of different ways in the manuscripts. There is a textual note on this word in the NIV which reads as follows: "Some manuscripts *Bethzatha*; other manuscripts *Bethsaida*." There are other variant readings as well, so that no one really knows the precise name of the pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem where Jesus healed the paralyzed man.

However, there is a clue in the Copper Scroll which may help to clear up the confusion. In Column 11 of this scroll we find the following words: "In Beth Eshdatain, in the reservoir, on your way in toward it: vessels of Leah's tribute." Apparently part of the hidden treasure, here designated as "vessels of Leah's tribute," was hidden in the reservoir or pool known as "Beth Eshdatain," which may well be the original form underlying the various spellings found in the Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of John. In that case, part of the temple treasure was hidden in the same pool where Jesus had performed his miracle about 40 years earlier.

Jesus trilingual

The other significant fact about the Copper Scroll which is relevant to the New Testament is the language in which the scroll was written, namely Hebrew. It used to be thought that the Jews of the first century no longer spoke Hebrew but would have used only Greek or Aramaic in daily life. But the Copper Scroll is written in a popular kind of Hebrew which seems to reflect the ordinary speech of every day. Partly because of the evidence of this scroll, most scholars today believe that many Jews of Jesus' day — including Jesus himself — were probably not bilingual, but trilingual, being able to speak not only Greek and Aramaic, but Hebrew as well.

In these two small and tantalizing ways the Copper Scroll brings us a little closer to the daily reality of New Testament times, and helps us to understand the concrete historical context in which Jesus Christ lived and died.

Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. Sheffield Academic Press recently published his little booklet The Copper Scroll: Overview, Text and Translation *(available from the Redeemer College bookstore).*

Yet another look at Shroud of Turin

TURIN, Italy (EP) — Radiocarbon dating of the Shroud of Turin, believed by many to be the burial cloth of Christ, suggests that the shroud originated between A.D. 1260 and 1390. But Nello Balossino and Pierluigi Baima Bollone, professors of computer science and forensic medicine respectively, have identified the faint image of an ancient Roman coin dating from A.D. 29 near the left eye of the cloth. That suggests that the cloth could date from the time of Christ's death. The archbishop of Turin has announced that the shroud will be placed on display behind bulletproof glass in 1998.

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Feature

Now I won't have a Daddy anymore

Gerald Oosterveen

The obituary simply announced the death of James Johnson III (not his real name). Tucked away among dozens of other notices in the Sunday paper it gave the usual information: age, family, place of memorial service and burial. As the chaplain who had known Jim for more than two years and who was present when he died, I knew there was more to the story.

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When Jim first came to the oncology unit he was confident and full of bluster. Yes, he was diagnosed with lung cancer, but the course of chemotherapy and radiation prescribed for him would get rid of it. This was little more than a nuisance, an annoying bump in the road that forced him to slow down temporarily. And why shouldn't he be optimistic? He had been successful in everything else he tackled.

When the first series of treatments was finished his appetite had diminished and his thick, dark hair had fallen out, common side-effects of chemotherapy. He joked about his bald head and about the time and money he saved not having to comb and cut his hair. In time both appetite and hair came back. But so did the cancer. He wasn't quite as confident when a different type of chemotherapy was recommended, but he accepted the challenge.

The hair disappeared again, food again began to taste metallic and Jim became increasingly tired. The cancer was doing just fine, however, oblivious to the treatment that was supposed to destroy it. Jim began to talk more about his family who needed him, his lovely wife, his beautiful children: a girl of five and James IV, who was three. He needed to work in his business so he could support them. He needed to be around to take his children to ball games and picnics. He wanted to walk his daughter down the aisle when she got married.

As a last, desperate effort he underwent a costly and painful bone marrow transplant. The cancer proved resistant once again. He began to breathe with greater difficulty, wheezing like an old man despite the oxygen he now used. Pain became a constant companion, only slightly controlled by medication. Finally he became so weak that he was forced to move around in a wheelchair.

Fear and regret

Some of the old bluster was still there, along with a desperate optimism. When radiation therapy began for pain control, he still hoped it would get rid of the tumors. Superficially, he remained his outgoing self, never failing to ask how my wife was doing when he discovered she was being treated for breast cancer.

But as his interest in others waned, his own diminishing chance of survival increasingly became the focus of his concerns. He began to express an intense fear of dying, an overpowering worry about who would care for his children and his wife; regret over the years of smoking that caused his lung cancer; embarrassment that, even now, he craved a cigarette periodically.

Macho man that he was, he talked more freely to female nurses than to males and was most reticent with me, the chaplain. It was his wife, to whom I often talked while he was being radiated, who shared with me many of Jim's fears along with her own pain.

Two years after the cancer was first diagnosed — two long and painful years of heroic but futile struggle — the last morning of Jim's life began in the hospital's oncology unit where he had already spent so much time. He had been admitted the evening before, barely able to breath even when fitted with an oxygen mask. When I saw him at around 9 o'clock, someone had brought his two children to see him. Minutes after they hugged him, Jim slipped into a coma. The children were quickly taken out of the room. The doctor came and could barely detect a pulse. Breathing became still more belabored.

I stayed with Jim's wife and parents throughout the day while they wrestled with the dilemma of whether to be aggressive or to let Jim die this day. The doctor suggested some options that to the family seemed to offer hope. Jim went down for a procedure to drain fluid from around his heart, then to the intensive care unit. By mid-afternoon it was obvious that the procedure had not been successful. Jim's pulse weakened, his heart beat became more erratic, the coma deepened. At age 43, Jim had obviously begun his journey to the next world.

The children were brought back into the room. Jim IV, now five, had little idea what was happening. "Daddy's sleeping," he concluded. The seven-year-old daughter, wise beyond her years and well-aware of her daddy's battle with cancer, looked at her mother and asked, "Will he get better?" Mom slowly shook her head.

A heart-wrenching cry tore through the room, "Now I won't have a daddy anymore." The adults wept too, I among them — I, the chaplain, for whom dying people are all too common and who's not in the habit of weeping over them. I could not help wondering whether Jim was still able to hear that agonizing wail that may well have been the last thing he heard before he finally passed over.

It doesn't seem reasonable to wholly blame Jim for embracing that deadly habit that inflicted such horrible pain on his little girl and her innocent brother, his wife and family. After all, he paid the greatest price for his mistake.

An unnecessary death

It doesn't seem reasonable to wholly blame Jim for embracing that deadly habit that inflicted such horrible pain on his little girl and her innocent brother, his wife and family. After all, he paid the greatest price for his mistake. What's more, when Jim started smoking, it was a glamorous habit. In the U.S., the Marlboro Man was everywhere with his cigarette to suggest that all real men smoke. But when his little girl cried out, I was angry with Jim for being so stupid as to start smoking, so weak that he couldn't quit even after learning what he was doing to himself. I was angry with him for doing this to her, to himself, to all of us in this room. Little children need their dads, but for these two little ones it was forever too late. None of this needed to have happened, but instead it happens a thousand times each day in North America.

I was also angry with the tobacco companies. In the face of overwhelming evidence that smoking is strongly addictive and each year kills thousands of persons — evidence they have known about, discussed and suppressed — they maintain that it is a harmless practice and continue to entice children and young people into lighting up. The Marlboro Man has been replaced by Joe Camel as the hero to imitate. And though cigarette adverstising is more regulated than it used to be, too many kids still get the idea it's cool to smoke.

I'm angry with stockholders who invest in this killer industry. I'm angry with the government which refuses to ban cigarettes for the deadly substance they are but continues to support tobacco growers with crop subsidies. I'm angry with tobacco farmers whose desire for profits overrides their responsibility to their fellow humans. They all had responsibility and bear guilt for that cry of a beautiful seven-year-old girl that haunts me still and that should haunt all who had a part in it.

No matter what we do, Jim will remain dead and his little girl won't have a daddy anymore. In time her heart will heal, but it will always be scarred. In time her little brother will understand why daddy does not live at home anymore. In time Jim's wife may also find happiness again. But none of that can undo this death that didn't have to be. What we can do is spread the word that smoking is not glamorous but dumb, not harmless but deadly. Maybe then, some good will come out of this senseless death.

CC FILES

If you smoke and love your children, stop before you do to yours what Jim did to his.

Rev. Gerald Oosterveen is oncology chaplain and manager of pastoral services at Christ Hospital and Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

Feature

Syncretism causes poverty in Africa

Henny R. Slopsema

Have you ever wondered why there is so much poverty and misery in the African countries south of the Sahara, while the majority of the population of these countries profess to be Christians? It seems that these millions of Christians make absolutely no difference on the economic or political direction of these countries.

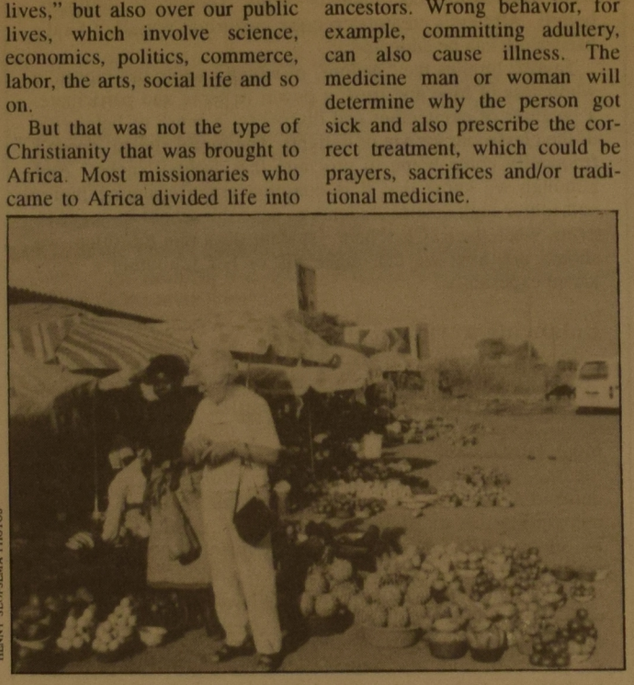
Most missionaries who came to Africa divided life into two separate realms — a spiritual realm of religious activities, moral teachings and church attendance, and a secular realm of every day activities in which the Word of God has little to say.

What has gone wrong?

In Matt. 28:18-19 we read that we must make disciples of all nations because all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ. That is, we have to go out to claim all aspects of our ordinary daily lives for Christ. Christ wants to be King not only over our "personal lives," but also over our public lives, which involve science, economics, politics, commerce, labor, the arts, social life and so on.

But that was not the type of Christianity that was brought to Africa. Most missionaries who came to Africa divided life into two separate, mutually exclusive realms — a spiritual realm of religious activities, moral teachings and church attendance, and a secular realm of every day activities in which the Word of God has little to say. Most teachers at our Reformed missionary school in Venda (South Africa) also believe that the purpose of Christian education is to "win souls." Even when the young people of our Reformed church go out to evangelize they will say that they go out to "win souls." The big question is always: "How do I get to heaven?"

Black Africans traditionally did not know such a separation between their religious life and their every-day activities. To them, life was religion. Take illness as an example: should one pay a visit to the medical doctor or to the witch doctor? The traditional African wants to know the "cause" of illness. The cause could be failure to communicate with one's ancestors, or perhaps the sick person has neglected or angered his or her ancestors. Wrong behavior, for example, committing adultery, can also cause illness. The medicine man or woman will determine why the person got sick and also prescribe the correct treatment, which could be prayers, sacrifices and/or traditional medicine.



HENNY SLOPSEMA PHOTOS

Henny Slopsema buys fruit at a fruit stall in Venda, South Africa.

Because they believe that sickness or any other tragedy always has a spiritual cause and not merely a physical or natural cause, many (black) African Christians will still go first to a witch doctor to discover the cause; and if that does not help, they will go to a medical doctor — like the teacher of our school who went for nine months to a witch doctor to be cured, before he finally went to a divine healer.

A God not big enough

Understandably, many blacks are not satisfied with the white Christian's half-hearted Christianity. They are afraid that a God who needs to be served only on Sundays cannot be powerful enough to take care of their everyday needs. Therefore, in time of need, they will still pray to their ancestors or go to a witch doctor.

The African "Zionist" churches, however, are almost all pagan churches which have added certain Christian beliefs to their own pagan traditions.

I once attended a Zionist church service. The reports which appeared last year in *Christian Courier* about the Toronto Blessing reminded me very much of the outward manifestations of this Zionist church: they sing accompanied by drums, they dance rhythmically, they clap, shout hallelujah, pray out loud, prophesy, they fall to the ground, make noises and sometimes burp to show that they are filled with the spirit; they heal the sick and speak in tongues. The spirit that possesses them, however, they believe is the a spirit of an ancestor, and they speak the language of their ancestors.

Their sermons take long hours and they seem to have a good time. However, their leaders have very little Bible knowledge and Christ is not the centre of their religion — they have their own messiahs. They do baptize in "living" water, but do not celebrate the Lord's Supper. There is little awareness of sin. Sin to them is "not paying attention to a taboo." Their prophets have the same function as their traditional witch doctors.

A traditional African must enrich him- or herself with "force" or power. That's why a witch doctor mixes his own medicines with that of another witch doctor's, or mixes his herbs with the organs of humans, preferably those of a white person. By mixing the two you add the force of the other person to your own.

They do the same with their religion. By adding something from the Christian religion to their own, they believe they become more powerful. They see the prosperous lifestyle of the whites and contribute this to the special power the God of the whites is supposed to have. By practising some Christian customs, they can add to their power. This is also why long names for churches are so popular, for example, "New Covenant Church of Christ in Zion."

Doing the washing close to Henny Slopsema's house.

Distinctive, biblical worldview needed

This is one way, although a wrong way, of adapting Christianity to an African culture. The Zionist Church is probably the largest church in Africa. Some Zionist churches are more Christian than others. The (black) Reformed Church of Venda has for some years given Bible courses to Zionist church leaders; the first students just graduated this year.

What Africa needs is a holistic, all-embracing biblical worldview: a Christian worldview that encompasses all aspects of people's daily lives

It is said that Zambia is fertile enough to feed the whole population of Africa. Venda is also very fertile as long as it gets enough water. Why, then, is Africa so poor? One of the reasons is that there are many taboos in the traditional religion. (You were not supposed to go to these woods or those rocks, etc.) Tribal, communal life also hindered development. And most missionaries emphasized the spiritual aspect of life, neglecting every-day life. During the Apartheid years many blacks would comfort themselves by saying that after this life they would have it better. I hear the teachers sometimes say to the children, "You don't want to go to hell, do you?" Many Christians think that a Christian should not get involved with economics or politics.

What Africa needs is a holistic, all-embracing biblical worldview: a Christian worldview that encompasses all aspects of people's daily lives; a worldview that relates Christian faith to daily living; a worldview that wants to be obedient to God's command to rule over, develop and care for God's creation (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 2:15; Psalm 8) in a way that is honoring to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31).

There are Christian Reformed teachers in North America who work for a few years for Wycliffe Bible Translators. But why not go to a Christian school in Africa and help the teachers there develop a curriculum which is based on a truly biblical worldview? The going will be slow but very rewarding.

The teachers here at Tshikevha Christian School in Venda have often asked me not to leave until I have told them everything I know. I have been here for four years and I think I've taught them everything I know about Christian education.

I challenge all Christian school teachers, but especially those who are thinking of retirement, to spend a few years in a Christian school in Africa and share with the teachers here all you know about Christian education. You will be thankful you had the opportunity.

Henny Slopsema has been teaching in Venda, South Africa. She hopes to return to Canada on October 5, and live in Belleville, Ontario.

Education

Calvin and Dordt fare best in fall enrolment at CRC-related colleges

Marian Van Til

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — While Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, has broken its all-time enrolment record, and the enrolment at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is up for the fourth straight year, The King's University College in Edmonton has maintained the enrolment status quo and Redeemer Reformed Christian College in Ancaster, Ontario, is suffering from a major drop in student numbers.

Dordt's enrolment for the academic year which just began came in at 1,269, toppling a record that has stood for 20 years. The current enrolment is an increase of 60 over last year and 51 over the previous record of 1,128 set in 1978-79.

In the 1980s when Redeemer and The King's were established, they siphoned Canadian students away from Dordt, but Dordt "responded aggressively, establishing new programs such as agriculture, engineering and social work, by reaching out to new sources of students and by working to improve retention," says Jim De Young in a news release from Dordt's Office of Public Relations.

Now, about 12 per cent of Dordt's students are Canadians. At one time the number was more than twice that.

Calvin College, the only one of the Christian Reformed-related colleges that is actually owned and supported by the Christian Reformed Church, is also happy with its enrolment. Calvin currently has 4,051 students, up for the fourth year in a row and 88 more than last year. The last time Calvin had more than 4,000 students was in 1991 when there were 4,025.

Of the 962 first-year students, 56 (5.3%) are Canadians; just under six per cent of the entire student body are Canadians.

The King's has 520 students in terms of body count, says Glen Keeler from the admissions office, which translates into 477.5 "full-time equivalent" (FTE) students. That FTE number is down by just 3/4 of a student from last year. The King's had hoped to grow by four per cent over last year, says Keeler, "but in context, we're doing very well." He says that secular universities, like the University of Alberta, are feeling the crunch, in terms of fewer students and decreased funding, so they have allowed more applicants per division and extended their cut-off date for applying. That hurts institutions like The King's.

Possible lay-offs

Redeemer has the same problem, only it's much more severe. Redeemer has 440 FTE students (470 head count), which is down 32 from last year. Marian Szelekovszky in admissions blames a situation similar to that in Alberta. The secular universities are accepting students who they probably wouldn't have accepted previously, many of whom might have otherwise gone to Redeemer. The significant drop in Redeemer's enrolment, along with its debt load, is causing a financial crunch, which, in turn, may cause the college to lay off staff and perhaps even professors.

Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, attracted sizable numbers of Canadian students in the '60s and early '70s. The college now has 593 FTE students (619 head count), less than a dozen of whom are Canadians. The current enrolment is just slightly down from last year but "we're not discouraged," says Ginny Pierson in TCC public relations. "Trinity's enrolment has generally been edging up, and last year we graduated a particularly large class."

CRC enclaves?

Though these five institutions were all begun by Christian Reformed people with a vision for Reformed higher education, all are trying to reach out to Christian students beyond those in the Christian Reformed Church, some more agressively than others. Currently, only 35 per cent of The King's student population is Christian Reformed; at Redeemer, it's 52 per cent; at Trinity, 51 per cent; at Calvin, 57.8 per cent. Dordt is even more "Christian Reformed" than Calvin, with a whopping 74.8 per cent of its students being members of the CRC.

Dead Sea Scrolls discussed in Vancouver

LANGLEY, B.C. (TWU) — Dr. James Vander Kam, a Dead Sea Scrolls expert who teaches at Notre Dame University, will be the keynote speaker at Trinity Western University's Dead Sea Scrolls Institute on Sept. 28. Vander Kam will also sign copies of his best-selling book *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, which has been translated into several languages.

Says TWU's Dr. Martin Abegg, "James Vander Kam is a major player in Dead Sea Scrolls research and publication. He is a well-known author, a renowned research scholar and represents the doctoral program at Notre Dame, which has a fine program in Dead Sea Scrolls, Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature." Notre Dame is one of the best-known Catholic universities in North America but it has a substantial handful of Reformed scholars on its faculty.

Americans warmer to government funding of non-public schools

WASHINGTON, D.C. (EP) — Most Americans still oppose using tax dollars to send children to private schools, but the idea is gaining acceptance, according to the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll. Asked whether parents should be allowed to send their children to private schools at taxpayer expense, 61 per cent said no and 36 per cent said yes. Three years ago, 74 per cent said no.

Americans were even more receptive to the idea when the question was phrased differently. Asked whether Americans should be given a voucher to send their child to any school — private or public — 54 per cent said no.

Pedagogeries

Alyce Oosterhuis

A vision statement

The board of the Edmonton Society for Christian Education (ESCE) recently adopted a vision statement as a dynamic summary of the mission preamble in their policy book: "ESCE, believing Jesus Christ is Lord over all of life, educates students for joyful responsible service to God and society."

Although the board and staff have not yet worked out all the implications of this vision statement, there are at least five crucial words in it (other than the faith claims) which will have an impact on the future of Christian schooling in their K-12 buildings: educates; joyful; responsible; service; society.

Educate: "to bring out, to lead, to develop from latent or potential existence; development of character or mental powers; give intellectual and moral training." These are Oxford Dictionary descriptions which assume that the student has the faculties to be led out, formed, developed. In contrast to the "nurture" concept so frequently cited in our Christian literature, education is intended to go beyond fostering care to teach and mould our students' skills, knowledge, attitudes, beliefs. All God's creatures require nurturing; not all of God's handiwork can be educated.

Joyful: implies the "shalom" of which I wrote last month: a wholeness of love and trust; a power to serve and participate; a laughter of excitement and discovery; a sense of belonging in the classroom garden of delights. The joyful student doesn't frequently come home to proclaim that "school sucks." And although we know that it is common practise among junior and senior high school students to describe school in negative terms, when the ESCE school student does this too often, we should ask how we can make his or her schooling a more joyful experience.

Balancing a 'rights' emphasis

In the present Christian educational climate, the term "responsive" tends to be preferred to ***responsible***. Responsive is more suggestive of a student's heartfelt responding to the school's vision statement. Responsible tends to be read as a more burdensome "must do" that is imposed upon us by others. And yet, in today's secular climate of everyone's demand of "rights," the use of "responsible" is the Christian's recognition that the imbalance of "rights" emphasis can only be addressed in an acceptance of human responsibility for maintaining God's creation.

Service demands actions, observable deeds, involvements with others. "To God and society" means that this service must go beyond the hermit's closet prayers, the couch potato's statements of faith, the church club's circle of friendship. Our students are to be guided, formed, educated to seek out ways to serve wherever they may be.

It is a bold vision statement. As a statement for an extensive Christian community it also becomes incumbent upon all our members to examine in their hearts whether they embody a "joyful responsible service to God and society."

Alyce Horzelenberg-Oosterhuis admits that she often fails in serving others joyfully and responsibly. She teaches educational psychology at The King's University College, Edmonton.

Peter and Marja are IN

Free food and fellowship! — sort of...

Dear P & M:

The Bible League is sponsoring a fundraising banquet at the local Holiday Inn. We've received complimentary tickets. We expect the evening to end with a request for donations of which a part (a large part?) will go toward paying for the dinner.

All our lives we have donated freely to the cause of Bible distribution. But we resent this method of promotion and fundraising. To us it seems pressure-laden, especially for low- income or high-output people (e.g., parents who support children in Christian schools and/or colleges). The widow's penny doesn't count anymore.

I know the rationalizations: such banquets reach a different class of people; they promote the work of Bible distribution; that's how it's done now, etc. But in our opinion the churches ought to promote clearly, and the members ought to respond generously. If that doesn't happen, something is wrong. Don't gloss it over with banquets in fancy places. Instead, let's get to the root of the problem.

To us and our friends this kind of solicitation of funds is a kind of trickery. One friend, a loving and generous widow, once attended such an affair and was sweet-talked into giving more than her budget allowed. The experience left her with a sour aftertaste. It makes us wonder whether we are really pleasing the Lord.

Are we just stubbornly old fashioned? Should we be open to other ideas?

By the way, we will not be attending the dinner; but to put our money where our mouth is, we will make sure that the Bible League gets an extra financial gift from us.

Dear Fundraising Banquets:

This fundraising approach works; otherwise, organizations wouldn't do it. Indeed, many Christian organizations besides the Bible League use this method for promotion and fundraising. Just because it works, however, isn't reason enough to employ such tactics. Let's look at some reasons that are valid and address your concerns.

Your first problem is overhead. As you point out, a large part of the requested donation will go towards the meal. How do we feel about that?

It is our understanding that a private donor is often willing to cover the costs of such events. If that's the case, then your entire donation goes to the cause. Even so, you might argue that such money might be better spent on the Bible League itself. We need to remember, however, an ancient economic principle: you have to spend money to make money.

Every organization needs to spend some money and some time to promote itself. A fundraising banquet comes under such promotional expenses as brochures, stamps, travel to organizations, free books or tapes, ads, and whatever else it takes for a cause to capture someone's attention. The Parable of the Talents upholds this economic principle.

Your second problem is trickery. You feel that the fundraising purpose is disguised as a free night out. What do we think about that?

We think a night out is a nice idea. It's twice as nice if a social need is matched with a Kingdom need. And we don't think that anyone is confused about the complimentary tickets. Those tickets invite you to a wonderful setting and an excellent opportunity to get the word across. Jesus had no problem with happy occasions. Actually, his presence at weddings and banquets earned him the nasty nickname "Winebibber" and he had to explain that his disciples had every reason to celebrate because the Bridegroom was with them. So when someone goes to the trouble of planning a good evening for the people of God, don't be a spoilsport. Go and have a good time in Jesus' name.

Your final concern is pressure. The story of your widowed friend is a good example of that concern.

No one watches over our shoulder to see the size of our cheque. Ultimately we are adults and we have only ourselves to blame if we give more that our budget allows. After all, from the time we receive the complimentary tickets, right up through the meal itself, everyone has had ample time to consider what to give, or even if it is possible to give. Frankly, the sour taste left in the mouth of your widowed friend is due to her impulse, not anyone's coercion. The experience should teach her that it is always best to decide beforehand how to respond to the inevitable plea for money.

Just as we are ultimately responsible for deciding and then sticking to the size of our gift, so the organization has the responsibility to avoid pressure tactics. Here is where a Christian organization distinguishes itself from a secular one. A truly Christian organization will reassure every person that their presence and their prayers are as important as their gifts. If some of our Christian causes have been negligent in this area, may this column remind them to reassure their guests that the widow's penny is as good as gold.

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

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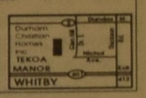

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RBC Reformed Bible College

Classifieds

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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Thank You

HAANSTRA:

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone for their cards, visits, food, phone calls and words of comfort with the loss of our dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather Harvey Haanstra. Please continue to support us in prayer.

Joyce Haanstra and family.

Interested in placing an ad?
Get in touch with us for details.

Birthday

1911 September 29 1996

MATTER:

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce the 85th birthday of our wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

ALICE MATTER
(nee DEBOER)

Our love and congratulations!
Her husband Peter Matter.
Faye & Mike Tjoelker
George & Jennifer (Aaron), Paul, Sylvia, Conrad
Richard & Jennifer Matter
Tom, Lisa & John (Courtney), Patricia, Heather
Rose & Andrew Vanderlaan
Ron & Janette, Cindy & Paul, Michelle & Chris, Peter & Sheila, Cathy, David
Luke & Hennie Matter
Peter, Elissa, Kyle, Emily
Bert & Teeny Matter
Janine, Gary, Sharleen
Home address: 256 Water St., Guelph, ON N1G 1B7

Anniversaries

Brampton, Ont. Georgetown, Ont.
1956 October 13 1996

"As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15b). With joy and thankfulness, we wish to announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

JACK and JANE FOKKENS
(DEBOER)

The Lord has blessed them richly, and we pray that He will continue to keep them in health and happiness for each other and their loved ones. It is also a special year as on May 21 Mom celebrated her 60th birthday, and Dad turned 65 on Sept. 25.

Love,
Henriette & Paul Thompson — Georgetown, Ont.
Eric, Adrienne, Laura
Janet & John Geertsema — Barrie, Ont.
Aaron, Janelle, Katelyn, Kelly
John & Karen Fokkens — Telkwa, B.C.
Micaela, Brent, Bryan, Luke
Karen & Andrew DeBeer — Barrie, Ont.
Mark, Leah, Sarah
Ingrid & David Flikkema — Brampton, Ont.
Devon, Aidan
Oma Fokkens (Janet Fokkens) — Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, Ont.
Home address: 19 McIntyre Cresc., Georgetown, ON L7G 1N5

Personal

ONE TO ANOTHER

Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue $5.
Write to:
#302, 1502-2nd Ave. S.
Lethbridge, AB T1J 4A2

Anniversaries

Aalten, Gld. Trenton, Ont.
1946 October 3 1996

With joy and thanksgiving to the Lord, we wish to announce the 50th anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

JOHN and MIEN HEIDEMAN
(nee MEYNEN)

May the Lord continue to bless them and care for them in the years to come.

Congratulations from all of us.
Henry & Marybelle Heideman — Baltimore, Ont.
Dawn, Kim & Jason (Jamie)
Christine & Jerry Wolters — Trenton, Ont.
Val & Dan (Sarah), Paul & Yvonne (Troy), Adam, Philip
Wilma & John Brak — Frankford, Ont.
Steve & Gina (Jacob), Heather & David, Virginia, Joe, Neil
John & Betty Heideman — Smithfield, Ont.
Marie, Kevin, Alison, Jennifer
Bill & Wilma Heideman — Baltimore, Ont.
Randy, Dennis, Julia, Tony
Elizabeth & Randy Calvert — Brighton, Ont.
Aaron, Justin, Ashley
Ed Heideman — Trenton, Ont.
Alex, Bobby

An open house will be held on Saturday, Oct. 5, 1996, between 2-4 p.m., at the Lion's Hall, King Street S., Frankford, Ont.
Home address: R.R.#3, Trenton, ON K8V 5P6

1971 October 9 1996

With joy and thanksgiving to God

CASEY and MARGARET KEUNING

hope to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We invite friends, clients and acquaintances to drop in at our open house on Oct. 12, 1996, D.V., at the Rehoboth Chr. School, 196 Inksetter Road, Copetown, from 2 - 4:30 p.m.

Best wishes only.
Home and business address:
208 Orkney Road, Lynden, ON L0R 1T0

1971 September 18 1996

With thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents

KEITH and MARIAN KNIGHT
(LOS)

Thank you for your example of God's love and faithfulness. May you continue to be blessed and to be a blessing.

With love,
Erika & Jon Bakker — Vernon, B.C.
Elise, Lauren, Bethany, Alison — Wallaceburg, Ont.
Address: 424 Nelson Street, Wallaceburg, ON N8A 4G8

Anniversaries

1956 October 11 1996

With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

COR and LOURA LOS
(nee DATEMA)

We hope and pray that God will continue to be with them and bless them.

Congratulations and love from:
Bill & Theresa Los — Lethbridge, Alta.
Reuben, Samara, Emily
Dick & Jennifer Los — London, Ont.
Nicole, Michelle, Jennalle
Janice & Peter Algra — Duchess, Alta.
Holly, Michael, Lauren
Teresa & Arn Dees — Calgary, Alta.
Timothy, Jeremy, Amy, Lisa

Open house at Bethel Chr. Ref. Church, 716 Classic Dr., London, Ont., on Saturday, Oct. 12, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., D.V.
Home address: 376 Speight Blvd., London, ON N5V 3L7

1946 October 10 1996

With thankfulness to God we wish to announce the 50th anniversary of our parents and grandparents. Congratulations Mom and Dad (Oma and Opa)

NICK and MARY
VAN DUYVENDYK
(nee LITTEL)

We, as a family, are grateful for you beyond what words can say. We love you both very much.

Much love from:
Jeremy & Liz Van Duyvendyk
Stephanie, Nico, Christy
Richard & Bernadette Van Duyvendyk
Nic, Maarten, Matilda, Ben
Ron Van Duyvendyk
Shannon, Heather
Tom & Janet Baird
Christopher, Mary Lynn

"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps.100:5).
Address: 467 Richardson Ave., Ottawa, ON K2B 5G9

1956 October 16 1996

We praise and thank our heavenly Father for the opportunity to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

JOHN and GERRY
VAN ZEUMEREN

We also thank both of them for the example of love that they have been and continue to be to us, their children and grandchildren:
Wilfred & Vickie — Nova Scotia
Jessica, Emily, Miranda
Randy & Jessica — Nova Scotia
Lacie, Robert, Daniel
Brenda & Al Bron — Prince Edward Island
Eric, Jeff, Kyle, Alaina
Mark & Cathy — Nova Scotia
Emma
Inger & Charlie Poirier — Nova Scotia
Christopher, Jamie
Rayna — Nova Scotia

There will be an open house, D.V., on Saturday, Oct. 12, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., at their home at 2 Sunnydale Cr., Bedford, NS B4A 2S4

Anniversaries

Fort William Thunder Bay
1956 October 17 1996

With thankfulness to God, we hope to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

JOHAN (JOHN) and MAATJE
VAN ELBURG
(nee BAKKER)

Mom and dad, grandma and grandpa, opa and oma, may our heavenly Father grant you many more years of health and happiness together. With love from your children and grandchildren:
Jenny & Henry Mol — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Kevin, Robert, Gary, Brian, Derek
Marianne & Archie Nugteren — Hensall, Ont.
Erice, Leah, Lynden
Joanne & Tim Pasma — London, Ont.
Christopher, Robert, Daniel, Lauren
Gerald & Tammy Van Elburg — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Joey, Devin, Samuel (with Jesus)
Fred Van Elburg & Julie Breukelman — Thunder Bay, Ont.

Open house at Hope Chr. Ref. Church, the evening of Oct. 17, 1996.
Home address: 406-145 Fanshaw St., Thunder Bay, ON P7C 5Y4

Obituaries

Psalm 23

Suddenly, on Wednesday evening Sept. 4, 1996, the Lord took to His eternal home our dear brother, brother-in-law and uncle

SAM ALBADA

Beloved husband of
Gwen Albada-Andrews.
at the age of 66.
Dearly missed by:
Grace & Clarence Bajema
Marilyn & Jon Bonsma and family
Andy Bajema
Ann-Julia Bajema
Pete Overgoor
Correspondence address:
Grace and Clarence Bajema,
4340 Malcolm, Nestleton, ON
L0B 1L0

We remember him as our brother, uncle and Pake.

After a short illness

HARVEY (HAIKE) HAANSTRA

passed away on Aug. 12, 1996.
He lived as a servant.
His focus was the Lord.
He passed into glory.

Brother to:
Klaas & Aafke Haanstra — Garijp, the Neth.
Tjeerd & Akke Inia — Hardegarijp, the Neth.
Uncle to:
Jan & Greta Haanstra — Erin, Ont.
and 12 nieces and nephews in the Netherlands.
Special Pake to:
Derek, Christa, Sarah and Anna.

Classifieds

Obituaries

May 23, 1969 - Aug. 26, 1996
Revelation 21

After a beautiful vacation our youngest son and brother

EDWARD NEAL BREEDVELD

went to be with his Lord.
He will be sadly missed by his loving parents, Peter and Janny Breedveld of Edmonton, as well as by his brothers and sister:
John & Nanda Zwart — Hollen, Ont.
Margaret & Irving Bos — Burlington, Ont.
Arnold & Sharon Zwart — Calgary, Alta.
Peter Breedveld Jr. — Calgary, Alta.
and numerous friends and relatives.
Edward had been a resident of Rehoboth Christian Homes in Stony Plain, Alta. Memorial services were held in the Ottewell Chr. Ref. Church of Edmonton, and the Hope Chr. Ref. Church of Stony Plain. The funeral took place in Edmonton on Sept. 5, 1996.
Correspondence address:
P. Breedveld, 9224 Ottewell Road, Edmonton, AB T6B 2C7

Drachtster Compagnie, Fr. — Abbotsford B.C.
March 28, 1905 - Sept. 3, 1996

On Tuesday, Sept. 3, 1996, the Lord took home His child,

GOITSKE JACOBI
(nee DE BOER)

She is now safe in the arms of Jesus.
Predeceased by her husband, Melle Jacobi, in February 1995, and granddaughter Hilda Veenbaas in April 1995.
Dear mother of:
Reinder & Marie Jacobi — Jarvis, Ont.
Reink & Emmy Jacobi — Carambei, Brazil
Jonas & Jenny Jacobi — Sardis, B.C.
Charlie & Alie Elgersma — Sardis, B.C.
Dear oma of 15 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held at the Chr. Ref. Church, Chilliwack, B.C., on Thursday, Sept. 5, 1996.

On Friday, Sept. 6, 1996, the Lord took unto Himself our dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather

(NICK) NUTTE KLOOSTRA

at the age of 84.
Dear husband of the late (Dorothy) Doutzen Kloostra-deVries who passed away on June 15, 1994.
He will be sadly missed by:
Ann & George Postma — Kingsville
Ruby & Jake Haasnoot — Gorrie
Ted & Edith Kloostra — Wroxeter
Betty & John Huizinga — Campbell River, B.C.
Theodor & Marg Kloostra — Elmira
Elizabeth & Rudy Jaklitsch — Kitchener
Thys & Marleen Kloostra — Kitchener
24 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.
The funeral took place on Monday, Sept. 9, 1996, at the Bethel Chr. Ref. Church in Listowel, Ont.

Feb. 19, 1907 - Aug. 27, 1996

The Lord in His grace took home to Himself His child

JANNA KAMERMAN
(nee POLS)

widow of Adriaan Kamerman, her beloved husband for 63 years.
"Ik zal raad geven; mijn oog zal op U zijn" (Ps.32:8) was her strength, comfort, and hope during her life and her source of peace when the Lord called her home.
Dear mother of:
John & Bette Kamerman
Cor & Agnes Kamerman
Abe & Ann Kamerman
Adrian & Nellie Kamerman
Femmie & John Feddema
Simon & Margaret Kamerman
as well as Oma to 17 grandchildren, and 17 great-grandchildren.
A memorial service was held at Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, Ont., on Aug. 29, 1996.
Correspondence address:
J. Kamerman, 65 Kentish Cr., Agincourt, ON M1S 2Z3

Promoted to glory on Sept. 1, 1996, in her 86th year

ANN KAMPHUIS-LENSTRA
(nee GROEN)

Since 1967 widow of Walter Lenstra, and since 1993 of John Kamphuis.
Also predeceased by a son Henk (in infancy) and in 1994 by son Wiebe (Bill) Lenstra.
Lovingly remembered by:
Hetty Vandermeer-Lenstra — Limehouse, Ont.
Hendrik Lenstra — Brampton, Ont.
11 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.
Also by Bill and Nellie Kamphuis — Kingston, Ont.
Her favorite text: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
Funeral and memorial service was conducted by Rev. J. Kuntz, Holland Chr. Homes, Brampton, Ont.
Correspondence address:
Hetty Vandermeer, R.R. 1, Limehouse, ON L0P 1H0

Na een zeer vruchtbaar leven en een kort ziekbed heeft God tot zich genomen onze geliefde moeder, schoon- en grootmoeder

TJITSKE MEYNEN-DOUMA

in haar 88ste levensjaar.
Den Haag, 14 september 1996.
I.N. Schouten-Meynen
A.W. Schouten
Johannes
Dirk-Bastiaan
Jasper
Correspondence address:
273 Central Avenue, Grimsby, ON L3M 1X6

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Call (905) 562-4908

Obituaries

Aug. 11, 1939 - Sept. 5, 1996
"The Lord is my Shepherd"

On Thursday, Sept. 5, 1996, after a six month battle with cancer, the Lord took home our dear brother and brother-in-law

JACOB AREND LENNIPS

Beloved husband of Matryke Noordegraaf.
Dear father of Jeanette Cachia and grandfather of Max.
Dear son of the late John and Janet Lennips of Carrying Place and Brockville, Ont., and stepson of Shirley Lennips of Brockville, Ont.
Son-in-law of Froukje Noordegraaf and the late Rev. Cornelius Noordegraaf of Toronto, Ont.
He will be sadly missed by brothers and sisters:
Ria & John Fledderus — Carrying Place, Ont.
William Lennips — North York, Ont.
Gerald & Hilda Lennips — Carrying Place, Ont.
Diane & John Kooy — Brockville, Ont.
John & Sherry Lennips — Brampton, Ont.
John Bakker — Gananoque, Ont.
Henry Bakker — Toronto, Ont.
Harry & Trudy Bakker — Brockville, Ont.
Margaret & Ron Parr — Brockville, Ont.
Leko Noordegraaf — Toronto, Ont.

Aalten, the Neth. — Wayland, Mich.
May 27, 1909 - Aug. 13, 1996

At dawn on the 13th of August 1996,

HENDRIKA ALEIDA TE HENNEPE
(WUBBELS)

went to be with her Lord and Savior.
She was preceded to heaven by her two oldest grandchildren Alynne Wesselius (1960-1971) and Henry Wesselius (1962-1962).
She is lovingly remembered by her husband Evert Hendrik te Hennepe, whom she married the 26th of March 1936, and her children:
Willem & Kathleen te Hennepe — Wayland, Mich.
Dian & Wilhelmus Wesselius — Forrest, Man.
Jack & Sherry te Hennepe — Byron Center, Mich.
Her sister Anna (and Bill) Navis, Byron Center, Mich., and her brother Hendrik Wubbels of Grand Rapids, Mich.
13 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren, as well as other relatives in Canada and the Netherlands.
Funeral services were held in Byron Center on Aug. 16, 1996, Rev. T. van der Heuvel of the Chr. Ref. Church officiated.
Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1.
Correspondence address:
E.H. te Hennepe, Sandy Creek Nursing Home, 315 East Elm Street, Wayland, MI 49348

Calendar of Events on page 15...

Obituaries

On Monday, Aug. 5, 1996, our dear mother, Oma and great-grandmother

WENDELINA WEEBER
(nee SMIT)

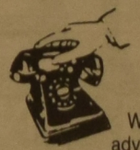
departed from us to be with her Lord in her 94th year.
Beloved wife of Hendricus Weeber, who preceded her on July 15, 1994.
She is sadly missed by her five children:
Gerdi & Jacob Cappon
Bert & Hennie Weeber
Peter Weeber
Renate & Ed Schranz
Katie & George Baarda
23 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.
They are also comforted in the knowledge God prepared a place for her in heaven.
How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent Word. What more can He say than to you He has said. To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose. I will not, I will not desert to its foes. That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake. I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

Sorrowfully, but confident of her victory in Jesus, we share with you the passing away of our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, on Friday, Sept. 13, 1996,

ALICE LANGEVELD
(nee VAN GALEN)

at the age of 69.
Beloved wife of Peter Langeveld †
Cherished mother and grandmother of:
Enica & Art Tolsma — Chatham
Alecia, John Paul, Nicole, James
Jack † & Marie Langeveld — London
Peter & Sonya (Cameron), Sherry, Christine
Wilma & Casper Saarloos — Aylmer
Pamela, Mason, Adam
Bill & Bonnie Langeveld — London
Billy, Jordyn
Walter †
Sandra & Randy Blacketer — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Mom is also survived by two sisters and three brothers, all of the Netherlands.
Mom brought lots of love, joy and laughter wherever she was. She was much loved by her church and school community. Above all else, she worked diligently at being a faithful servant of the Lord. We shall deeply miss her.



Why not take advantage of our **Calendar of Events** for your next event?

Teachers

ATHENS, Ont.: Athens Chr. School requires **a qualified teacher for a maternity leave position for Grades 5-8**, 18 students. No French or music required. Double grades with single subject 28% of time. Send resumes to:
Jannie Feenstra, Principal
Athens Chr. School
21 Wiltse St. E.
Athens, ON K0E 1B0
Phone: (613)924-9500 (school)
(613)924-9690 (home)

For Sale

For Sale: 25 computer workstations with 10 base 2 cable and connectors. The workstations are 286's with 640K RAM. They have no hard drives. Some have 5.25" floppy disk drives. Each computer comes with keyboard and monitor (mostly CGA's). Also a number of 5.25" floppy disk drives and Janet network software. Price for this package: $3000 o.b.o. Contact **Lambton Chr. High School at (519) 337-9122.**

Church News

Canadian Reformed Churches

Worship in Florida:

—The **American Reformed Fellowship** invites you to worship with them in Florida on **Sundays from Nov. 17, 1996, to April 1997.** They meet at Palmview First Baptist Church, 49thStreet at U.S. 41, across from Skyway Village in Palmetto, 11:15 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Bring your lunch and enjoy a social hour between the services.
If no minister is available from one of the American or Canadian Reformed Churches, videotaped services on a large screen will be shown.
For more information:
in Florida, call (813) 729-4863 or (813) 739-1306. In Canada, call (905) 563-8383; or write: Mr. M. VanderVelde, 4219 Mountainview Rd., Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2

Christian Reformed Church

Address change:

— Rev. William G. Vis, 33 Cross St., Whitinsville, MA 01588, effective immediately.

Welfare is a policy in crisis

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO — Welfare is a policy in crisis, which neither more money nor less money will solve, says a massive new study published by the Center for Public Justice in Washington, D.C.

The problem is especially acute today when governments have gotten tired of handing out large sums which don't solve problems, but only make them worse. Think of the cuts of Ralph Klein in Alberta, of Mike Harris in Ontario, and Bill Clinton's recent signing of a bill that whacks at U.S. welfare.

The center brought together over a period of three years more than 30 top Christian scholars and practitioners to meet, argue and try to make sense of the problem of poverty. The result is a 582-page book, *Welfare in America: Christian Perspectives on a Policy in Crisis*, edited by Stanley Carlson-Thies and James Skillen, published by Eerdmans. The book breaks new ground in Christian thinking about welfare.

The problem seems largely to be one of philosophy, of attitude, conclude these writers. To think of the poor as victims, inactive lumps that have fallen through the crack, is wrong, they say. We need to think of the poor as persons who have responsibilities.

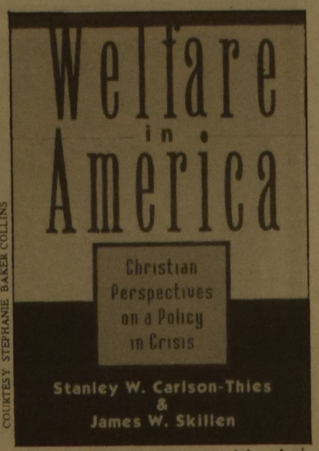
Often people need welfare for just a few months. A calamity has befallen them and they need a lift to get back on their feet.

But many seem like "welfare bums." Long-term welfare recipients need help to assume responsibility for their own lives. Here the government can do only so much. A whole society is needed, from extended family to schools, churches and a range of non-government agencies.

Christian vision is vital

The Christian vision for all of us is that we grow to maturity (Eph. 4:15). Helping people grow to maturity does not mean removing their obligations, but, instead, helping them fulfil the many responsibilities of life, says Skillen.

Christian organizations are especially needed, since Christian vision is special in giving hope to poor people. Experience shows that Christians are the most successful helpers when people have fallen into a hole. Churches and para-church groups are both important. The success of the many 12-step



COURTESY STEPHANIE BAKER COLLINS

self-help programs, with their strong spiritual emphases, shows that the Christian faith is a key to recovery. That's true in work with poor people, too.

It's fascinating, in that respect, to read Anne Motley Hallum's report that very poor Guatemalan people who are converted to a vibrant Christianity find a hope in the Gospel that enables them to take the kinds of steps needed to relieve their poverty.

God calls governments to relieve poverty

Governments have a special responsibility, even though they should not generally run helping agencies. Psalm 72 is among Bible passages that say that governments have responsibility to help the poor, points out Stephen Charles Mott. But there are special problems for government in the U.S. in supporting Christian ministries, where a sharp separation of church and state reigns. A solution to that, says Stephen Monsma, is for the government to issue vouchers to the poor for services which they can redeem at either Christian or secular agencies.

Sometimes welfare policy is clearly part of the problem, and sometimes it tears up family structures. This can happen when a single mother loses her welfare cheque if an adult male lives in the house with her, and when single teenage girls have babies in order to get welfare money. Sometimes welfare subsidizes bad choices.

Welfare recipients often do make bad choices and lead dysfunctional lives. They need to set themselves on a better course, and they need help in doing that.

But it is wrong to give welfare money to a person who can work but won't, says Bob Goudzwaard. Working is not always a solution to poverty, though. Mary Van Hook points out that poor rural families usually have at least one fulltime worker, which says that something is wrong with such a rural economy.

From 'cure' to 'care'

Welfare as we know it is in crisis. But the key problem is not money — throwing more money at poverty won't help, and severe cutbacks are sure to hurt. We need to shift our thinking, says Clarke E. Cochrane, from the dominant naturalistic goal of *cure* to the Christian ethic of *care*.

What's needed is to recognize that a government's mandate to develop a "just social order" means it needs to maximize the opportunities for people to fulfil their various responsibilities. The most important question in poverty and welfare, says Charles Glenn, is "how to build on the strengths that already exist among poor people, rather than to continue to treat the needy as helpless victims."

Although this is primarily an America study, Canadians Paul Marshall, John Hiemstra and Stephanie Baker Collins were among the active participants.

Average citizens need to get acquainted with street life, says Youth for Christ

ANN MARIE ROUSSEAU

CC Staff

TORONTO — Big city streets are a hub of activity, some good, some bad, which involves a unique mix of cultures and a diverse group who call the streets home. Toronto Youth for Christ (TYFC), along with four other ministries/agencies — Sanctuary, Yonge Street Mission/Evergreen, First Nations Gospel Assembly and The Dam — is sponsoring two "awareness concerts" designed "to introduce street life to people like you and me," says a TYFC news release.

"Trust on the Line" will take place on Friday, Nov. 1 and Saturday, Nov. 2 at 8 p.m. at Sanctuary, 25 Charles Street E., in the heart of downtown Toronto. Two local bands will be featured: Outrider, which plays hard and classic rock; and Red Rain, a rhythm & blues group. Insights into street life will be given by "experienced street specialists" from the sponsoring agencies.

TYFC says the event costs only $5, plus a gift of one of the following: a bottle of calcium supplements; a bottle of children's multi-vitamins; a pair of socks. The calcium and vitamins will go to groups that minister to women and children with AIDS; the socks will go to First Nations Gospel Assembly for its ministry to the homeless.

The two concerts will also serve to launch "Operation Good Thing," TYFC's annual Christmas project that provides new sleeping bags, hats, gloves, socks, Bibles and duffle bags to street people.

For more information call (416) 218-6769.

News Digest

Poland liberalizing abortion laws

WARSAW, Poland (EP) — Poland's lower house of parliament voted Aug. 30 to liberalize the nation's abortion law, permitting abortion on demand before the 12th week of pregnancy.

The government body voted 208-61 to amend a restrictive 1993 abortion law, despite strong opposition by the Roman Catholic Church. Parliament passed the same sort of amendments in 1994, but the changes were vetoed by then-President Lech Walesa, who is a devout Catholic. The current president of Poland, former Communist Aleksander Kwasniewski, said he will sign the law after its expected passage in the Senate.

In a statement read to about 100,000 Catholics at Poland's holiest shrine, Pope John Paul, who is Polish, said, "It fills one with pain that in our Fatherland, which suffered so much during World War II, the drama continues of the deaths of thousands of innocent and defenceless human beings who are being denied the right to life."

De Klerk apologizes for rights violations

CAPE TOWN, Africa (EP) — Former South African President F. W. de Klerk apologized Aug. 21 to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "Truth Commission" for human rights violations which took place under the nation's apartheid system of white rule.

"The National Party is prepared to admit its many mistakes of the past and is genuinely repentant.... We have gone on our knees before God Almighty to pray for his forgiveness," said de Klerk. The former national leader ended his statement with a call for racial reconciliation, saying, "We must accept the importance of reconciliation, of coming to terms with ourselves, our neighbors and our past — of forgiving and of being forgiven."